

Assessing One and All: A Web-based Professional Development Project

You are invited to participate

This project is a collaborative effort of our research team at the University of Wisconsin, professional development leaders at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. In addition to the sample of Arizona participants, we are also working with similar groups of educators in South Carolina and Florida.

The following description is a summary of the project's overall objectives as it appeared in our grant proposal:

This project will evaluate a hypermedia distance education initiative to enhance educators' decisions regarding the participation of children with disabilities in assessments, and to apply their enhanced decision making to children's Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The initiative promotes situated, social, and distributed knowledge (Putnam & Borko, 2000) via internet-based hypermedia modules, virtual and physical discourse communities, case-based learning, and traditional media. Learning content is grouped into three modules: (1) principles, policies, and practices of educational assessment, (2) large scale assessment, and (3) accommodations and alternate assessment. The initiative, developed in partnership with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), will proceed in three phases: (1) validation of module content and process, (2) pilot dissemination to three intact educational communities, and (3) national dissemination to 600 educators, parents, and administrators across the US. We will evaluate project impact via pre/post evaluation participants' knowledge, concurrent- and post-participation surveys, and permanent products demonstrating knowledge application (e.g., IEPs). Fees generated for continuing education certification (via CEC) and graduate credit (via Gallaudet University) will sustain the program during and after the funding cycle.

Key questions about the project

Why am I being asked to participate?

We are inviting you to participate in a study to help us evaluate whether an Internet-based course improves people's knowledge and skills for educational assessment, large scale testing, accommodations, and alternate assessments for students who have disabilities. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study will investigate the effects of "Assessing One and All," an Internet-based course offered by the Council for Exceptional Children. We want to know whether participating in the course changes educators' and parents' knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to educational assessment and accountability for students with disabilities.

What will my participation involve?

If you decide to participate, you will meet with study representatives twice on days about three months apart at your school (after school) for about 90 minutes each day. During the first meeting, our representatives will ask you questions in a focus group with other participants (about 45 minutes) and complete a survey and pretest of your educational assessment knowledge (about 30 minutes). We will ask you to complete a survey of your continuing professional development activities related to educational assessment and accountability every other week for 12 weeks. This will take about 5 minutes every two weeks, or a total of about 30 minutes over 12 weeks. During the second meeting, we will ask you to complete a posttest and survey (about 45 minutes), and complete an activity during the remaining 30 minutes. These required activities take less than a total of 3 hours over the course of the entire project.

All participants will be invited to take the Internet course. If there are more than 25 participants who want to take the course, we will select 25 volunteers randomly. If you are not selected to take the course, we will ask you to complete the required activities, and we will pay you for your participation.

If you choose to take the course, and are selected for the course, you must complete the Internet course, readings, and Activity Book. These additional activities take 15-40 hours, for which you will earn continuing education units from CEC, and if you elect to do so, earn graduate course credit. Participants who complete the course will also get to keep the course textbook. Participants who take the course will also participate in a 45-minute

focus group at the end of the study, and must provide a copy of two IEPs that they influenced addressing students with disabilities and participation in educational accountability systems. One IEP should be authored within 12 months prior to the start of AOA Project/Phase II

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the study, and the other IEP should be authored after the participants completed the course. All IEPs should be anonymous (i.e., names removed) except for the study participant.

Is my participation confidential?

Yes. We will remove participant names from all information in the study so that your name cannot be linked to data in the study. Data from the study will be entered on computer using an anonymous identification number. All records from the study, and the list linking participant names to the anonymous identification numbers, will be kept in a locked file drawer in the researchers' office for seven years. Only the researchers will have access to the records. The researchers may present information from the study at meetings and in publications, but none of the information will identify you.

Are there any risks?

No. There are no known risks for participating in this study.

Are there any benefits?

Yes. All participants will contribute to the profession by helping us understand whether and how Internet-based continuing professional development can enhance the education and assessment of students with disabilities. In addition, it is anticipated that most participants will acquire significant new knowledge concerning educational assessment, the use of test results, and the implementation and wise use of testing accommodations for students with disabilities.

Will I be compensated for participating in the study?

Yes. Participants who take the course will learn about educational assessment, accountability, test accommodations, and alternate assessment. They will also have their course tuition paid (\$495), will keep the course textbook *Assessing One & All: Educational Accountability and Students with Disabilities* (\$40), and will earn 4.5 continuing education units from CEC. Participants who complete the course will also earn \$50 and may earn graduate course credit for their work, although they must pay university tuition and fees to do so. Participants who do not take the course but complete questionnaires and a pre-test will be paid \$50 for their time.

If I decide to start the study, can I change my mind?

Yes. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Because we cannot replace people who withdraw, we would ask you not to volunteer unless you are reasonably confident you can complete the study. Individuals who withdraw without completing all parts of the study will not receive compensation (there will be no partial payments or continuing education units).

Can you remove me from the study?

Yes. We will remove people who are selected for the course but who do not complete the study requirements in a timely fashion (i.e., 3 to 3.5 months). We will contact you at least twice to remind you to complete the study requirements before we remove you from the study, and make arrangements with participants who want to complete the study whenever possible.

Does this project have Human Subjects Approval?

Yes. This project has been approved by the University of Wisconsin's Human Subjects Committee. This approval was completed in February, 2001 and was awarded #166-1. If you have any questions about this approval, please feel free to contact the UW-Madison School of Education office staff at 608-262-2463.

Who should I contact for more information?

Please contact Stephen N. Elliott at the University of Wisconsin-Madison via email (snelliott@facstaff.wisc.edu), phone (608-262-8841) or fax (608-274-9925).